

10-1986

## A Woman of her Time: Birdie Robertson Johnson

Alice J. Cooksey

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ethj>



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Tell us how this article helped you.

---

### Recommended Citation

Cooksey, Alice J. (1986) "A Woman of her Time: Birdie Robertson Johnson," *East Texas Historical Journal*: Vol. 24: Iss. 2, Article 8.  
Available at: <http://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ethj/vol24/iss2/8>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by SFA ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in East Texas Historical Journal by an authorized administrator of SFA ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [cdsscholarworks@sfasu.edu](mailto:cdsscholarworks@sfasu.edu).

**A WOMAN OF HER TIME:  
BIRDIE ROBERTSON JOHNSON'**

*by Alice J. Cooksey*

Over the past two decades, scholarship in women's history has revealed the decisive influence which women's social, study, and service organizations have played in the expansion of woman's role from caretaker of home and family to active participant in public affairs. Although women first gathered in church-sponsored reform groups in the 1840s, it was not until after the Civil War and Reconstruction that many women began to organize and join clubs, first for literary study and later for progressive reforms. The woman's club movement, as it has come to be called, grew rapidly in the 1890s with the formation of the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) and the involvement of thousands of women nationwide in various types of organizations. Ultimately, the leadership skills that many women developed from their work on behalf of women's causes in club activities led to an increasing political awareness. After World War I and the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment granting woman suffrage in 1920, women first entered the realm of politics in large numbers in the early 1920s.<sup>1</sup>

Birdie Robertson Johnson, a longtime resident and community leader in Tyler, Texas, was truly a woman of her time. Although she, like many of her contemporaries, remained dedicated to the traditional women's interests of home, family, and community, she, nonetheless, ventured far from her Texas home to pursue her political goals. Through three distinct phases in her life, this East Texas woman evolved from women's club leader to behind-the-scenes political secretary to a national political figure in her own right, serving Texas as its first Democratic National Committeewoman.

Johnson began her involvement outside the home in church-sponsored organizations and literary societies. She rose to leadership in those groups, and like so many other women, became influenced by the rising political consciousness of the national women's clubs early in the twentieth century. She became actively involved in politics in order to further the progressive reforms sponsored by the women's clubs. This movement into political work, at first as a campaign advisor for her husband and later as a fundraiser and campaigner for Woodrow Wilson, marks the second stage of her political growth. Finally, Johnson was no longer willing to stand on the political sidelines. All of her previous training in leadership through women's clubs and campaign groups culminated in the third stage of her political growth when she ventured into political activism on her own behalf and gained a

---

*Alice J. Cooksey holds an M.A. in history from The University of Texas at Arlington*

position on the Democratic National Committee. Johnson's political career thus clearly demonstrates how many Southern women grew from literary and social club leaders to political activists.

Eliza Sophia Robertson was born November 15, 1868, in Salado, Texas, to a prominent pioneer Texas family. Like most girls of her class and time, Johnson received a genteel education and upbringing.<sup>3</sup> As a teenager, she attended the Wesleyan Female College in Macon, Georgia, graduating in 1888 with a degree in Musical Arts. After graduation, she returned to Texas and soon married Cone Johnson, the state senator from Tyler, Texas, where the couple settled in 1889.<sup>4</sup>

As the wife of a successful lawyer-politician and the daughter of a respected Texas family, Johnson belonged to the upper class. Since she was highly intelligent, unburdened by the cares of housework and motherhood, and free from the necessity of holding a job, she looked outside her home for meaningful activities to fill her spare time. She first joined the Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Marvin Methodist Episcopal Church and the Quid Nunc literary club in the 1890s.<sup>5</sup> Dating to 1886, the Quid Nunc Club was one of the first organized literary clubs in Texas, and like many of its sister organizations in other cities it held weekly meetings dedicated to literary study and related service projects, such as building book collections. Club members adopted a motto, "Keep your eyes on the stars, but don't forget to light the candles by the way, which reflected their idealistic yet practical outlook." They also revealed their belief in traditional values by embracing Longfellow's phrase, "Home-keeping hearts are the happiest."<sup>6</sup>

When the Quid Nunc Club became a charter member of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs (TFWC) in 1897, Johnson began an involvement that would take her all over Texas and into other states, and bring her in contact with women leaders wherever she visited. By 1905, she had risen to the presidency of the Texas Federation. The themes of her administration mirrored the interests of the women's club movement in general, and also demonstrated her values as a dedicated reformer. She placed the greatest emphasis on education and the extension of the club movement.<sup>7</sup> Johnson's annual address to the TFWC convention in 1907 also reflected the new political emphasis in women's clubs that had begun at the convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs in 1906. She praised Congress for passing several laws of interest to women in Texas concerning education, child welfare, and pure food regulation. By focusing on those laws that were of particular interest to women, Birdie Johnson showed that, although her public activity was becoming more political, her ideas of women's proper interests remained consistent with traditional values.<sup>8</sup>

While the TFWC required a large share of Johnson's time, she also devoted herself to several other women's groups. She had a strong interest in the study of history and she also took a great deal of pride in her family heritage. She channeled those interests into groups such as the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT), the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), and the Daughters of 1812, organizations which combined reverence for the past with ideals of historic preservation and patriotism. Birdie Johnson was an early member of the DRT, serving on its State Executive Board for many years.<sup>9</sup> She also delivered a "memorial address" in 1900 before the Texas House of Representatives during the DRT convention in Austin. This experience in public speaking would prove very valuable when she again went before the lawmakers on behalf of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) a year later.<sup>10</sup>

The UDC, in fact, may have been even closer to Johnson's heart than the DRT. As she had worked to honor the heritage of the Texas Republic, she also strove to honor the memory of the Confederacy through her work for the UDC. Johnson began her involvement in the Texas Division of the UDC as president of the Mollie Moore Davis Chapter in Tyler in 1898.<sup>11</sup> The next year, she attended the annual convention of the Texas Division in Austin where she was elected to the office of corresponding secretary. By 1900, Johnson had risen to the office of first vice-president of the state organization. She did not remain long in that position, however, because she soon succeeded to the presidency upon the death of the elected president, Benedette Tobin, on April 4, 1901.<sup>12</sup>

Johnson's eight-month term as president of the UDC-Texas Division was one of building and accomplishment. The UDC organized thirty-four new chapters in Texas in 1901 and inaugurated a campaign to secure money for a monument to General Albert Sidney Johnston from the Texas legislature.<sup>13</sup> Because previous direct appeals had not been successful, Johnson decided to enlist the public in lobbying tactics. As the official history of the UDC notes, "She aroused the public sentiment by means of letters, petitions, memorials, circulars, and appeals to the State press, and enlisted many prominent, influential citizens" to help her bring pressure on the Texas lawmakers. When the legislature convened for a special session in 1901, Birdie Johnson personally took the UDC appeal before the lawmakers. These efforts proved successful as the legislators voted to grant the UDC an appropriation of ten thousand dollars toward the Albert Sidney Johnston Memorial.<sup>14</sup> Despite numerous appeals that she remain active in the state hierarchy when her presidential term expired in 1902, Johnson decided to limit her future UDC activities to Tyler, where she served as chapter president for fourteen years.<sup>15</sup>

One reason, perhaps, that Johnson put her UDC-Texas Division work behind her was that, beginning in 1902, she undertook a more direct role in public affairs. Her experience with the Texas school system while president of the TFWC apparently prompted Texas Governor Joseph D. Sayers to appoint her to the Board of Regents for the newly created Girls' Industrial College in Denton. Her work on that Board, the first college board in Texas to include women, involved hiring faculty and establishing curriculum guidelines for the new school.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, she began serving on the Executive Board of the Conference for Education in Texas, an organization formed by persons interested in educational reform in Texas schools. One of the functions of the Conference consisted of publishing and distributing bulletins to the general public dealing with educational reform, hardly a minor undertaking. In 1908, for example, the group sent out over 250,000 bulletins. In recognition of their efforts, the Conference received the endorsements of the Texas State Teachers Association, the Texas Farmers Congress, and the TFWC.<sup>15</sup>

Within a few years, Johnson's arena again shifted. Although she retained membership in several women's organizations and continued to serve in areas of public education, she began devoting much of her attention to politics.<sup>16</sup> The major impetus for this change came in 1908 when her husband re-entered Texas politics after a hiatus of sixteen years. That year, Cone Johnson became the chief rival of the controversial United States Senator from Texas, Joseph W. Bailey. The senator, who was seeking to lead the state's slate of delegates to the Democratic National Convention that year, had been involved in a questionable financial transaction with a Waters-Pierce Oil Company executive and did not have enough support to guarantee himself the leadership of his own delegate slate. As a result, the state Democratic committee had called a special primary election between Bailey and Johnson for the principal delegate spot.<sup>17</sup>

In the bitter statewide campaign which ensued, Birdie Johnson played an active role, applying the skills learned through her years of club leadership to her husband's political advantage. In one unusual incident, Birdie effectively and publicly aided her husband in countering an accusation raised against him by the Bailey faction. Referring to a political contest in 1892 between Governor James Stephen Hogg and his Democratic challenger, George Clark, Bailey caused a stir by charging that Johnson had proven disloyal by working against Hogg. After searching through scrapbooks, however, Birdie Johnson produced newspaper articles substantiating her husband's support of the incumbent governor. During the next few days, Johnson acknowledged her help in his speeches, and the story appeared in many Texas newspapers. The incident caught the imagination of many anti-Bailey partisans, brought

an influx of support for Cone Johnson's campaign, and made Birdie an overnight celebrity in Texas political circles.<sup>20</sup>

After all the favorable publicity, Birdie Johnson assumed a more visible role in aiding her husband's campaign. She received letters from people advising her of his strength in their regions and asking her help in scheduling him for future engagements. She also began to advise him on how best to pursue his campaign. Several days after the scrap-book incident, for example, Birdie became aware of new charges that Bailey was planning to bring against Johnson, and she wired him to wait for a letter from her before answering any allegations.<sup>21</sup> Later the same day, she wrote that Bailey supporters were planning to charge Johnson with sexual improprieties and excessive familiarity with black voters. With such tactics, she believed, they hoped to make him angry and thus divert him from the real issues of the campaign. In her letter, Birdie advised, "Now don't pay any attention to it and don't take up your time too much while speaking to explain these things for that is what they want." She also reminded Johnson to keep his campaign centered upon Christian values. "Remember that you are standing up for God," she admonished, "and do his work like the lowly Nazarene, Christ Jesus did." She continued the letter in the same manner, combining good political advice—"Tell the people that the question is not what you have done but what Bailey has done."—with strong moral encouragement that emphasized the role of religion in his campaign. Thus she exhorted her husband, "'Do noble deeds!' talk noble things in the love and fear of God, and he will make his light to shine on you, and work confusion to those that assail you."<sup>22</sup>

While Johnson was on the speaking circuit, Birdie continued to play an important role, handling correspondence and scheduling appearances. In addition, she kept her husband informed and boosted his morale with words of assurance. Her advice often emphasized moral issues; in one letter she applauded what others had termed his "preaching." "I want you to be known in Texas [and] loved as the *preacher statesman*," she encouraged him, and suggested that he open or close some of his speeches "by invoking God's blessing on the people of Texas."<sup>23</sup> While Birdie's emphasis on religion was consistent with traditional beliefs about women's proper sphere of influence, her advice went further than mere encouragement. Her direction was so important and so widely noticed that one Dallas newspaper printed her picture on its second page under the headline, "Mrs. Cone Johnson Who Materially Aids Husband in His Campaign."<sup>24</sup>

On the eve of the May election, Cone and Birdie returned to Tyler where he delivered his final campaign speech. Ten thousand people turned out simply to see their arrival. Two bands playing "Dixie" greeted the Johnsons, while they entered in a carriage decorated with

American and Confederate flag motifs. Cone and Birdie rode around the town square to acknowledge the cheers of the crowd. Birdie, the newspapers reported, "was radiant with pride and happiness." and she "waved a flag in acknowledgment of the applause." "The greeting given her . . . was no less hearty than that accorded her husband."<sup>25</sup>

After the emotional ending of the campaign, the results of the primary election must have come as a deep disappointment to both Cone and Birdie. He carried thirty-eight counties, but it was not enough. The Bailey slate won the election by over seventeen thousand votes.<sup>26</sup>

During the next four years, Johnson maintained an active role in Texas politics and Birdie continued her civic involvement. By 1912, however, her interest in politics reached new levels.<sup>27</sup> In that year, the Johnsons attended the Democratic National Convention in Baltimore, where they both developed a strong interest and commitment to Woodrow Wilson's presidential campaign.<sup>28</sup> Following the national convention, Birdie was no longer content to stay on the political sidelines. Combining her leadership and organizational skills with her zeal for progressive values, she went to work for the Woman's National Wilson and Marshall Organization. She accepted the presidency of its Texas branch, and within two months of the convention was in New York working as vice-president of the national organization.<sup>29</sup>

From her office on Fifth Avenue, Johnson sent out appeals to women across the country for personal and financial support. Some of her mailings were practical. In letters to Texas women, she laid the groundwork for a state celebration of Wilson and Marshall Day on November 2, 1912, giving advice on organizing celebrations and demonstrations.<sup>30</sup> In other mailings, she stressed the endorsement that Woodrow Wilson had given issues in which women had the greatest interest—home, children, and social conditions. She promised that the Democratic Party would be free of special interests and would listen to those concerned about working women and child welfare. Rather than urging her correspondents to militancy, however, she played upon the traditional ideas of women's sphere by asking that they "exert that influence which woman possesses" for the election of Wilson to the presidency.<sup>31</sup>

When Cone Johnson earned an appointment to the State Department in 1914 for his support of Wilson, the Johnsons moved to the nation's capital. The three years which they then spent in Washington were a break in the continuum of their lives. For a brief period, family concerns, social obligations, and travel dominated Birdie Johnson's life, and she was involved in only a limited amount of political activity.<sup>32</sup> When the couple returned to Tyler, however, Johnson picked up where

she had left off. Not only did she resume the work she had done before, but when America entered World War I in 1917, she joined thousands of other women from all levels of society in working to support the country's participation. Johnson served on the executive board of the Tyler chapter of the American Red Cross, turning her talents to raising money for the war effort. She also directed the Woman's War Saving Committee in Smith County and campaigned extensively for the Liberty Loan Committee.<sup>33</sup>

As one might expect, Johnson did not retreat to private life when the war ended in 1918. She again took the role of community activist for women's interests and continued to be a dominating influence in such traditionally feminine organizations as church-sponsored programs and the Quid Nunc Club.<sup>34</sup> In 1919, she became involved in an effort to establish a chapter of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Tyler in order to help young women who were moving into the city in search of employment. According to the Tyler newspaper, she did "everything in her power to start and maintain" the local organization, "bending every energy and effort" to gain public support.<sup>35</sup>

Johnson did not rest on her laurels after her YWCA victory. Her next campaign involved voter education for the new women voters in 1920. When the Smith County Equal Suffrage League, which she had headed before leaving for Washington, evolved into the local League of Women Voters (LWV), Johnson set to work with a fervor to educate women in their newfound rights. She worked within the LWV, and also moved into the Democratic Party structure to accomplish her goals of advancing women's interests in the governmental forum.<sup>36</sup>

The League of Women Voters became the spear point of Johnson's political drive. In all probability, as the wife of a prominent Texas politician and as an experienced national campaigner, she found it easier to enter the Texas Democratic Party than a complete novice would have. In fact, she used her skills learned from her previous social and political campaigning plus her position in the LWV to work within the party system against her old political foe, Joseph Bailey.

Where Birdie had worked behind the scenes to aid Johnson in his campaign against Bailey in 1908, she now actively entered a political contest in order to defeat him. In 1920, Bailey had entered the gubernatorial race in Texas against three other candidates. The results of the primary election forced a runoff between him and his principal opponent, Pat Neff. Where Bailey represented the conservative faction of the party because of his opposition to woman suffrage and prohibition, Neff represented the progressives, favoring both woman suffrage and prohibition. The choice was clear for the members of the Texas LWV. If Bailey won, they feared women would lose their vote



in the primaries and face the same kind of disenfranchisement suffered by the blacks in Texas.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, several of the League members formed a "State Women for Neff" campaign organization with Birdie Robertson Johnson and Nonie Boren Mahoney as directors. This group tried to organize all Texas women to work against Joseph Bailey's election, spending over one thousand dollars in their efforts to defeat him. In so doing, however, the LWV greatly damaged its reputation as a non-partisan, educational organization.<sup>32</sup>

Besides heading the "State Women for Neff," Johnson tried to personally influence public opinion against Bailey. She produced a broadside aimed at the women in her county in order to organize them to stand up for their voting rights. Her main purpose seems to have been to make women aware that they were in danger of losing the vote if Bailey were elected. She reminded women that the law required them to register with the county tax collector before they could become eligible to vote, and she appealed to them to carry out the necessary requirements and then to exercise their right. Johnson warned that certain laws of great interest to women that had been passed by the Texas legislature were then in danger of being rescinded. Although she did not mention Bailey by name, the reference to him was quite clear. "If the political influences which dominated Texas for many years are re-enthroned in Austin," she warned, "we may expect these laws to be repealed or destroyed and the good women of Texas return to parading, petitioning, and buttonholing the men for laws for the protection of the homes and youths of Texas."<sup>33</sup>

At the same time that Johnson campaigned against Bailey, she also made a place for herself within the Texas Democratic Party. In May 1920, she won election as a delegate from East Texas to the Democratic National Convention in San Francisco. Cone Johnson also won election as a delegate-at-large, and was named the official spokesman for the Texas Democratic Party at the convention. "Thus the Johnson household had the distinction of having the master and mistress delegates to a national convention for the nomination of candidates for President and Vice-President of the United States," the Tyler newspaper reported. Local pride in the Johnsons was also evident in the article: "This never happened before in Texas. This never happened before in any American state."<sup>34</sup>

At the convention in July, Birdie Johnson received a tremendous honor. The caucus of the Texas delegation unanimously elected her to be the state's first national committeewoman.<sup>35</sup> As further indication of her importance in the Democratic Party, she was appointed a member of the group that traveled to Dayton, Ohio, to formally notify the Democratic presidential candidate, James Cox, of his nomination. During the general election campaign that autumn, she led a women's

division created by the Texas Democratic Party and also actively worked for the national Democratic ticket in her capacity as national committeewoman."

During the early 1920s, Birdie Johnson continued to be active within the Texas League of Women Voters.<sup>13</sup> She was particularly concerned with one of the League's major goals, that of improving the quality of citizenship. In 1923, she prepared a lengthy paper on the subject in which she eloquently outlined many of her social and political philosophies.

Johnson began her tract on citizenship by defining it as a quality of humanity rather than of sex alone. The proper expression of a woman's citizenship, she wrote, should be in working to improve the community. The woman citizen should be loyal to the government and inform herself of its workings and policies. Although these ideas applied to everyone, male or female, women did have particular responsibilities. She should strive, as Johnson herself had, to develop more beneficial conditions for the home and family. In order to do so, she must exercise her right of suffrage in the most responsible manner. Johnson then called for organized women to carry the full load of citizenship. If they would, she predicted, women would come together into a united force for the purpose of securing a permanent world peace. She closed her treatise by expressing hope that America would turn back to its true democratic values and seek God's wisdom to guide the country to a better, more noble existence."

Shortly after the appearance of her work on citizenship, Johnson withdrew from politics. She began to suffer from long periods of illness and was hospitalized several times. When she was able, she worked on a book about her family heritage. Her life that had been spent in working on behalf of others came to an end on November 15, 1926, her fifty-eighth birthday.<sup>14</sup> The *Dallas Morning News*, which carried the news of her death on its front page, gave her an excellent testimonial, "Texas has never known a finer type of Southern womanhood," its editor Cullen F. Thomas wrote; she would be remembered as a "native daughter, beautiful, gracious, and long identified with the social, civic, and political life of the State."<sup>15</sup>

Clearly, Birdie Robertson Johnson was one of the Progressive Era's "New Women," as historian Ann Firor Scott and others have described them.

Like thousands of other committed, caring, publicly active women during that period, she saw the problems in her environment and worked to solve them through women's clubs and political activism. Although the "New Women" of this period, like Johnson, centered their concerns within the realm of home and family, their influence on the country

cannot be underestimated. By focusing their efforts on improving conditions for their own families, women effectively served to stimulate progress for the entire nation." As Birdie Robertson Johnson wrote during her term as president of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs, "There remains now no doubt that the club movement has been a tremendous force for good in all directions in which it has labored."<sup>8</sup>

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>This article is derived from my Master's thesis ("Her Life Shines Out Upon the Way": Birdie Robertson Johnson, Southern Social Feminist," University of Texas at Arlington, 1985), prepared under the direction of Professors Kathleen Underwood, Evan Anders, and Kenneth Philp.

<sup>2</sup>For very early histories of the woman's club movement, see Mrs. J. C. (Jennie June) Croly, *The History of the Woman's Club Movement in America* (New York, 1898) and Mary I. Wood, *The History of the General Federation of Women's Clubs* (Norwich, Mass., 1912). The most respected general histories of the woman's rights movement, feminism, and the club movement include: Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (New York, 1968); William L. O'Neill, *Everyone Was Brave: A History of Feminism in America* (Chicago, 1971); Andrew Sinclair, *The Emancipation of the American Woman* (New York, 1965); and Page Smith, *Daughters of the Promised Land* (Boston, 1970). Several other very good studies have been written, most within the last decade: Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York, 1980); Carl Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York, 1980); Sheila M. Rothman, *Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present* (New York, 1978); Mary P. Ryan, *Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York, 1975); Anne Firor Scott (ed.), *The American Woman: Who Was She?* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1971); June Sochen, *Her Story: A Woman's View of American History* (New York, 1974); Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience* (New York, 1984); and Robert E. Riegel, *American Women: A Story of Social Change* (Rutherford, N. J., 1970).

<sup>3</sup>Although her family Bible records her name as Eliza Sophia, in later years, she gave her full name as Sophia Elizabeth Robertson Johnson. Evidently she never used either name, preferring instead the nickname "Birdie" which she used all of her life. For "Eliza Sophia" reference, see Malcolm McLean (ed.), *Papers Concerning Robertson's Colony in Texas*, vol. XI: *Nashville-on-the-Brazos* (Arlington, Tex., 1984), p. 208. For "Sophia Elizabeth" reference, see Genealogy data sheet provided for publication in *First Families of America*, dated April 22, 1924, in the Robertson Colony Papers, Miss Ella Fulmore Harllee Collection, *Special Collections, Library*, The University of Texas at Arlington (hereinafter cited as EFHC), Box 84.

<sup>4</sup>William C. Harllee, *Kinfolks": A Biographical and Genealogical Record* (New Orleans, 1937), pp. 2907-2908; *Yearbook for Texas, 1901* (Austin, 1902), p. 189; Genealogy data sheet, April 22, 1924, EFHC, Box 84.

<sup>5</sup>Harllee, *Kinfolks*, p. 2907; Sinclair Moreland, *The Texas Women's Hall of Fame* (Austin, 1917), p. 101; *Dallas Morning News*, November 16, 1926.

<sup>6</sup>Croly, *Woman's Club Movement*, p. 1098.

<sup>1</sup>Stella Christian (ed.), *The History of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs*, vol. 1 (Houston, 1919), pp. 140-141.

<sup>2</sup>*History of the TFWC*, pp. 156, 181, 187. Historian Jill Conway found in her study of women reformers that women generally accepted the stereotyped, traditional interpretation of their role throughout the period of reform, 1870-1930. She concluded that women perpetuated the stereotype by insisting that women were better agents of social change because they were inherently sensitive to social sin. See Conway, "Women Reformers," pp. 166-167.

<sup>3</sup>See Member's Badge for the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, EFHC, Box 81. See also Membership Certificate for the DRT, dated August 13, 1895, in the Birdie Robertson Johnson [Mrs. Cone Johnson] Papers, Special Collections, Library, The Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas, Mss 20, Folder 307 (hereinafter cited as MCJP). [The originals of this collection are located in the Robertson Colony Collection, Library, The University of Texas at Arlington.]

<sup>4</sup>*Yearbook*, p. 189.

<sup>5</sup>Unidentified and undated newspaper clipping, MCJP: Genealogy data sheet, April 22, 1924, EFHC, Box 84; Harllee, *Kinfolks*, p. 2907; *Yearbook*, p. 189.

<sup>6</sup>*Yearbook*, p. 190; United Daughters of the Confederacy, Texas Division, *Proceedings of the Second Annual Meeting of the Texas Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Galveston, 1898), pp. 49-50.

<sup>7</sup>Newspaper clipping, *Houston Daily Post*, October 21, 1900, EFHC, Box 81; United Daughters of the Confederacy, Texas Division, *Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Convention of the Texas Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Ennis, Tex., 1901), pp. 17, 22, 89.

<sup>8</sup>*Yearbook*, pp. 191, 429. Photocopy of a history of the UDC that Birdie Johnson wrote for the *Yearbook* is located in EFHC, Box 82.

<sup>9</sup>Unidentified and undated newspaper clipping, MCJP; Mrs. Margaret L. Watson, Historian emeritus, Texas Division, UDC, to Mrs. Cone Johnson, August 4, 1912, EFHC, Box 83.

<sup>10</sup>Ruth Ann Overbeck, "Alexander Penn Wooldridge," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 67 (1964), pp. 531-533; Unidentified and undated newspaper clipping, MCJP; Joyce Thompson, *Marking a Trail: A History of the Texas Woman's University* (Denton, Tex., 1982), pp. 3-4.

<sup>11</sup>The Conference for Education in Texas factsheet for 1901, EFHC, Box 83.

<sup>12</sup>Women were not encouraged to strive for important posts within the political parties. Since they did not yet have the right of suffrage, their volunteer efforts in politics were usually channeled toward routine paperwork and fund-raising work with other women. See Emily Newell Blair, "Women in the Political Parties," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 143 (May 1929), pp. 217-229.

<sup>13</sup>For a detailed version of the Bailey controversy and the special primary election, see Ralph W. Steen, "A Political History of Texas, 1900-1930," in Frank Carter Adams (ed.), *Texas Democracy, A Centennial History of Politics and Personalities of the Texas Democratic Party, 1836-1936*. Vol. 1 of 4 Vols. (Austin, 1937), pp. 344-352. See also Lewis L. Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists: Texas Democrats in the Wilson Era* (Austin, 1973).

<sup>14</sup>Tyler (Tex.) *Daily Courier and Times*, April 1, 1908; *Dallas News*, April 1, 1908.

<sup>11</sup>Telegram, Birdie R. Johnson to Cone Johnson, April 3, 1908, Cone Johnson Papers, De Golyer Library, Fikes Hall of Special Collections, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas (hereinafter cited as CJP), Box 1, Folder 7.

<sup>12</sup>Birdie R. Johnson to Cone Johnson, April 3, 1908, CJP, Box 1, Folder 7.

<sup>13</sup>Birdie R. Johnson to Cone Johnson, April 12, 1908, CJP, Box 1, Folder 7.

<sup>14</sup>*Dallas News*, April 12, 1908.

<sup>15</sup>Tyler (Tex.) *Daily Courier and Times*, May 3, 1908; *Dallas News*, May 2, 1908.

<sup>16</sup>*Dallas News*, May 3, 1908; May 4, 1908.

<sup>17</sup>See the Tyler (Tex.) *Daily Courier and Times* for articles pertaining to Johnson's political campaigns, particularly: April 15, 1910; May 2, 1910; June 1, 1910; and June 17, 1910. A flyer addressed "To the Democratic Voters in Texas," dated July 9, 1910, contains a rebuttal to some charges against Cone Johnson that were racist in nature. They were insults against his character "as a cultured and hightoned Southern gentleman." All of the above are in EFHC, Box 83. See also newspaper Tyler (Tex.) *Daily Courier*, March 6, 1912, CJP, Box 2 (Scrapbook).

<sup>18</sup>Harlee, *Kinfolks*, p. 2907.

<sup>19</sup>Newspaper clipping, *The (New York) World*, September 30, 1912, MCJP.

<sup>20</sup>Rough draft of an appeal for political support on Woman's National Wilson and Marshall Organization letterhead stationery, New York City, dated October 7, 1912, signed Mrs. Cone Johnson, MCJP.

<sup>21</sup>Form letter on Woman's National Wilson and Marshall Organization letterhead stationery, New York City, dated October 23, 1912, signed Mrs. Cone Johnson, MCJP.

<sup>22</sup>In my thesis, I examine the years spent in Washington, D.C., in some detail. However, these years are beyond the scope of the purpose of this article.

<sup>23</sup>Unidentified and undated newspaper clipping, MCJP; Newspaper clipping, handwritten notation crediting *Dallas News*, June 10, 1917, EFHC, Box 83.

<sup>24</sup>Breckenridge, *Women in the Twentieth Century*, p. 57; Rothman, *Woman's Proper Place*, pp. 74-76.

<sup>25</sup>Unidentified and undated newspaper clipping, MCJP; Undated flyer, "To the People of Tyler and Smith County," MCJP.

<sup>26</sup>Unidentified and undated newspaper clipping, MCJP; Harlee, *Kinfolks*, p. 2907.

<sup>27</sup>Emma Louise Moyer Jackson, "Petticoat Politics: Political Activism Among Texas Women in the 1920s" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1980), pp. 29, 31. The Terrell Election Law, instituted in 1905, effectively disenfranchised blacks in Texas by barring them from voting rights in the direct primary of the Democratic Party's system of nominating elected officials. Since the Democratic Party in Texas constituted three fourths of the voting strength in the state, blacks were effectively limited in their potential for political influence. See J. Mason Brewer, *Negro Legislators of Texas and Their Descendants: A History of the Negro in Texas Politics from Reconstruction to Disenfranchisement* (Dallas, 1935), pp. 113-114.

<sup>28</sup>Jackson, "Petticoat Politics," p. 34.

<sup>29</sup>Printed broadside, "To the Women of Smith County," signed Mrs. Cone

Johnson, in MCJP. It is important to note that when Johnson appealed to the women of Smith County on Bailey's threat to their right of suffrage, she restricted her appeal to white women only. This characteristic was shared by many Southern suffragists in order to overcome the prevalent fear that women suffrage would endanger white supremacy in the South by enfranchising the black women. Birdie Johnson, like those suffragists, ignored the potential black vote and directed her arguments only to the white population. In all likelihood, she accepted the desirability of white supremacy and limited suffrage, as did most Southern suffragists. See Kraditor, *Ideas of Woman Suffrage*, pp. 165, 189, 217.

<sup>40</sup>Newspaper clipping, Tyler (Tex.) *Daily Courier-Times*, May 28, 1920, MCJP. Although Johnson's election as a national delegate was noteworthy, she joined ninety-six other women as delegates and 292 as alternates to the Democratic convention. See table 52 in Breckenridge, *Women in the Twentieth Century*, p. 289.

<sup>41</sup>Women were given status on the Democratic National Committee at the urging of Mrs. George Bass, chairwoman of the Women's Bureau of the National Committee. Blair, "Women in the Political Parties," p. 217.

<sup>42</sup>Harlee, *Kinfolks*, p. 2907; *Dallas Morning News*, July 1, 1920, and July 3, 1920; Jackson, "Petticoat Politics," pp. 26-28, 35-37, 39.

<sup>43</sup>Jackson, "Petticoat Politics," pp. 47, 51.

<sup>44</sup>Rough draft, "Citizenship" paper, November 26, 1923, EFHC, Box 84.

<sup>45</sup>Telegram, Cone Johnson to Mrs. William C. Harlee, November 16, 1926, MCJP. I was unable to locate a copy of Johnson's death certificate despite two searches by the Bureau of Vital Statistics in Fort Worth (she died while hospitalized at Southwestern Hospital in Fort Worth). According to her great-nephew, Dr. Malcolm McLean, Director of the Robertson Colony Collection at The University of Texas at Arlington, Johnson probably suffered from some form of cancer. He remembers visiting his great-aunt Birdie while she was hospitalized. He was struck by her remarkable beauty and care for her appearance at a time when she was deathly ill.

<sup>46</sup>*Dallas Morning News*, November 16, 1926.

<sup>47</sup>Scott, "New Woman," pp. 475-576. O'Neill, *Everyone Was Brave*, pp. 85, 88-89.

<sup>48</sup>Fannie C. Potter, ed. and comp., *The History of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs*, vol. 2 (Denton, 1949), p. 33.